

2006 fishingforecast

new and improved:
iowa lake, stream and facility improvements

Lake Projects Paying Dividends To Iowa Anglers

Story by Mick Klemesrud

Photos by Clay Smith

It's spring and the novelty of attending the various sport and vacation shows has worn off. Baseball is down to making its final roster cuts and spring football is getting underway. The days are getting longer, and the sun is getting warmer. Oil the reels folks because it's time. The 2006 open water fishing season is finally here.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources fisheries experts from around the state expect fishing to be good again this year in part because past water quality improvement projects have led to better water quality in lakes and streams. There have been a number of new physical improvements at several lakes in recent years that are now paying dividends. Better yet, it was another year of impressive fish growth.

Nowhere has the fish growth been more welcome than at Spirit Lake, where the 13-inch-plus walleyes from the 2001 class have finally moved past 14 inches and "a load is ready in the spring," said Tom Gengerke, fisheries supervisor for northwest Iowa.

Taking a quick look around

the state, and there is probably no other region as poised for success as southwest Iowa, where numerous projects and lake renovations are beginning to show results. The DNR added spawning beds, in-lake habitat, improved lake watersheds and renovated fish populations aggressively during the last few years. At Icaria, Anita and Fogle lakes, anglers should have excellent fishing. This is year three for the fish renovations at Icaria and Anita. Both lakes should have excellent fishing, especially Anita, if it refills. Anita is still about 5 feet low.

"If Anita fills, fishing will be gangbusters. If it doesn't fill, fishing will still be good, and we will try to provide access to put a boat on the lake," said Andy Moore, fisheries supervisor for southwest Iowa. "Icaria has 13- to 15-inch walleyes already and bluegills in the 7-1/2-inch neighborhood."

Improvements to Fogle Lake included lowering the lake level to combat an over-abundance of small fish, and installing spawning beds to bring fish near shore and available to land-bound anglers.

Spawning beds were placed in a number of other lakes in southwest Iowa in 2005 and more will be added in 2006. But anglers will have to do some exploring. Moore said he doesn't plan to reveal the locations.

While seeing those lakes rebound is good news, there is an old standby not too far away poised for another banner year.

"We had great crappie fishing last year at Lake Rathbun and we will again this year," said Steve Waters, fisheries supervisor for southeast Iowa. "This lake is a destination for crappie and walleye anglers. Last year the walleyes went wild with possibly the best fishing ever in 2005."

Walleye fishing at Rathbun is a little different than other traditional walleye lakes: it is a summer fishery. As the heat of the summer approaches and walleye fishing is generally slowing, Rathbun is just beginning. There is also an excellent number of channel catfish and a booming population of white bass that has gone somewhat ignored.

As for the traditional walleye lakes – Clear, Spirit, Storm, Black

Hawk and West Okoboji – how will fishing be in 2006? Just fine.

At Clear Lake, the tremendous start in 2005 was slowed when the yellow bass spawn hatched, offering a huge feast and making old marble eyes more finicky. “The fish are averaging 16 to 19 inches, and should provide good action this year,” Gengerke said. Yellow bass should average 10 inches, but will be fewer in number from past years. There is also a substantial increase in the muskie population, with an estimated 25 percent of the fish surveyed in the spring of 2005 exceeding 40 inches.

Storm and Black Hawk lakes each have improving walleye numbers and sizes but will probably offer better fishing for other species. Storm Lake should have excellent fishing for channel catfish, between 2 and 5 pounds, and white bass throughout the entire open water season. Black Hawk Lake will have tremendous fishing for 8- to 10-inch crappies and bullheads, and good early spring action for yellow bass.

West Okoboji Lake and its tremendous water quality and topography offers a diverse fishery, but the most consistent species in this lake is the bluegill. Of course smallmouth bass, muskie, northern pike, largemouth bass, walleye and yellow perch will be available in the 136-foot deep lake, and offer a different challenge. But the most consistent fish has been, and should be again, the scrappy bluegill.

“You really never know what you’re going to catch at West Okoboji, because this lake really

has it all,” Gengerke said. “It’s nice to come in with some big crappies, a walleye or two, some perch and a basket of bluegills. There is a lot of northern pike in the lake and smallmouth and largemouth bass.”

Bluegills will also be the premier species at Lake Sugema.

“If you’re a bluegill buster, put this one on your chart. The lake has good habitat and is just a tremendous bluegill lake,” Waters said. Other “circle on the map” bluegill lakes are Hawthorn, Belva Deer, Geode, Wapello, Big Creek, Fogle and the backwaters of the Mississippi River.

“Lake Geode is the Duke basketball of bluegills. It is consistently one of the top producers in the state over the years,” Waters said. “And Lake Wapello is one of my favorite escape lakes. The renovation work in the 1990s has brought good fishing and good water quality. It has become a consistently great fishery for bluegills

— up to 10 inches.”

Quality bluegill fishing is also available at Lake Hawthorn, but it is just one of many attractions at this 172-acre lake in Mahaska County. The lake has incredible bass structure, and probably the best bass population, for all sizes up to

A number of improvement projects in recent years is paying off for Iowa anglers. Water quality initiatives, infrastructure improvements and habitat development have all created additional and enhanced fishing conditions.



8 pounds, Waters said. Plus it has an excellent population of channel catfish up to 22 inches. "Right now, it is the place to go," Waters said. "Hawthorn is a complete lake, in the middle of nowhere."

Big Creek is making a move to become a premier bluegill lake this year. "This is an excellent bluegill fishery and is something people should take advantage of, especially in early June," Moore said. "If you find the spawning beds, you can do okay."

Another standby, the mighty Mississippi, has the best fish diversity in the state. There is good bluegill fishing in the backwaters, and the river is a channel catfish factory and can offer many different fishing experiences.

"Largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill, walleye, sauger — the Mississippi River has it all," said Bryan Hayes, fisheries biologist at Manchester. The upper Mississippi River has a robust population of northern pike.

Walleye anglers in the Big River begin fishing the tailwaters in early spring, then move to the wing dams during the summer months. In Pools 9 through 15, there is a lot of young walleyes coming on and fishing will be improving. Extensive habitat work at Mud and Sunfish lakes at the lower end of Pool 11 near Dubuque, are providing important deep water and over winter habitat, and will offer excellent panfish and bass fishing.

The in-river habitat improvements at Mud and Sunfish lakes were not the only projects in



northeast Iowa. Some important cold water streams also saw extensive work.

Hayes said that work has contributed to a tremendous growth in the number of streams with self-sustaining, naturally reproducing trout populations. In 1990, there were six streams with self-sustaining populations of brown or brook trout. Today, there are 27. Watershed improvements, combined with a research project on the survival of fingerlings reared from wild trout, has made today the "good old days" when it comes to trout fishing.

In Allamakee County at Big Paint Creek, major habitat work during 2004 and 2005 has improved the stream dramatically, and more

is planned for 2006. "In the past, Big Paint Creek was considered a marginal stream, with trout stockings in the spring and fall, but not in the heat of the summer. Now we can stock it year round, on a weekly basis," Hayes said.

Big Paint winds through a mix of public and private land and into the Yellow River State Forest. Some of the private land is open to public fishing, but not all. Hayes said it is important to the future of fishing that anglers respect private property, take out everything they take in and treat the land with respect.

Another project that is showing major improvements is Lake Macbride.

"Macbride is one of the lakes



I'm most excited about," Waters said. Improvements to keep sediment out of the lake, protect the shoreline, and new in-lake fish attracting habitat have led to excellent water quality and clarity and to an improved fishery. Macbride has a lot of 8- to 10-inch crappies, and a great bass population, including the hard fighting Kentucky spotted bass. Waters said he is also starting to see catchable-size bluegills that had been absent in the past.

Also making a re-appearance is the smallmouth bass population in the catch-and-release-only area of the Middle Raccoon River, from the Lennon Mills Dam at Panora to the Redfield Dam. Moore said sections of the river were deepened to 10 to

A number of Iowa lakes will look — and produce — a lot better to Iowa anglers in 2006. A number of lakes undergone additions and improvements in recent years, including the addition of fishing piers, jetties and enhanced fish populations.

12 feet, and some holes were dug up to 300 feet long. There are a lot of public accesses in that stretch and fishing has been good.

Rivers can be a bit tricky to fish, but have the potential to offer unbelievable action. In northeast Iowa, smallmouth bass should be king this year in the Maquoketa River, especially in the catch-and-release area from the Delhi Dam downstream, in the Upper Iowa, the Cedar from Janesville north and the Wapsipinicon from Central City through Independence. Other rivers with improving smallmouth numbers are the Volga, Turkey and Mississippi River Pool 9 through 13. Many of these same streams also have tremendous walleye fishing.

"From a smallmouth standpoint, I think things are looking better out there, and the walleye population has been improving ever since 2000," said Hayes.

Things are looking better nearly everywhere when it comes to fishing. There have been a number of projects to improve fishing across the state over the last year or two, including new fishing jetties, fish cleaning stations, boat ramps, stream accesses and more.

The northwest district alone accounted for two gravel boat ramps, three dredging projects, three universally accessible fishing piers, two in-lake habitat projects and four

accesses. Also added were four docks, three ramps, five fish cleaning stations, one pier, three jetties, one silt pond and one aeration system in the past four years.

There are a number of projects slated for 2006, including lake renovation projects at Viking, Cold Springs, Pierce Creek and Thayer.

Viking Lake will be lowered in the fall and killed out to eliminate a yellow bass population that has taken over the lake. It will be restocked in the fall with advanced-growth fingerlings, including 2- to 3-inch bluegills, 5-inch largemouth bass and 7-inch channel catfish. More than 20 silt basins will be installed in the watershed to keep nutrients and sediment out of Viking Lake.

"We won't do anything to the lake level until after Labor Day," Moore said.

The renovation plans at Cold Springs, Pierce Creek and Thayer Lake are to combat carp and grass carp that has impaired water quality.

So, with all the new features, watershed improvements, fish stocking and other work, what will make 2006 a good year of fishing?

"The combination of standby lakes and the lakes coming off renovation work, and watershed improvements will make it a good year. The improved water quality means better fish growth and better fishing," Moore said.

Waters had a different take.

"This will be a good year if people get off the couch, saddle up the vehicle and head out for fishing," Waters said. "The opportunities are everywhere, just make yourself a part of it."

north^{east}iowa

By Bill Kalishek, Regional Fisheries Supervisor

smallmouth bass

Cedar River, **Bremer** – Decent numbers of smallmouth bass between Waverly and Janesville.

Cedar River
Floyd and Mitchell

– Good populations throughout both counties; catch-and-release from Halverson Park to the dam at Otranto.

Maquoketa River catch-and-release area, **Delaware** – Classic rock habitat in this stretch makes for excellent smallmouth bass fishing. Better than average reproduction during early 2000s has resulted in good numbers of fish exceeding 12 inches available.

Maquoketa River, **Jones** – Anglers fishing from Monticello dam downstream through Pictured Rocks area will find fair numbers of smallies.

Mississippi River, **Pools 9 through 13** – Better numbers of smallmouths can be found in Pools 9 and 10, but fish-

able populations are present downstream through Pool 13. Fish along shoreline rock protection, rocky day markers, and wingdams, especially during low water conditions. Good numbers of 10- to 13-inch fish but fish up to 4 pounds are routinely caught.



Turkey River,
Clayton, Fayette, Winneshiek, and

Howard)
– You can find

smallmouth just about anywhere in this river.

Try wading the portion in Howard County during the summer.

Upper Iowa River, **Allamakee, Winneshiek, and Howard** – Good smallmouth numbers throughout this river. Float the upstream areas in Howard County during higher flows in the spring.

Volga River, **Fayette** – Small stream that can be fished by floating or wading; public access at the Volga River Recreation Area and the town of Fayette.

Wapsipinicon River, **Buchanan** – A lot of fish in the 10- to 15-inch range. Fish rocky shorelines or fallen woody structure with both live baits or artificial lures. Recent fish surveys show improved numbers.

channel catfish

Big Woods Lake, **Black Hawk** – Big fish and lots of them. The connection with the Cedar River pumps catfish into this lake.

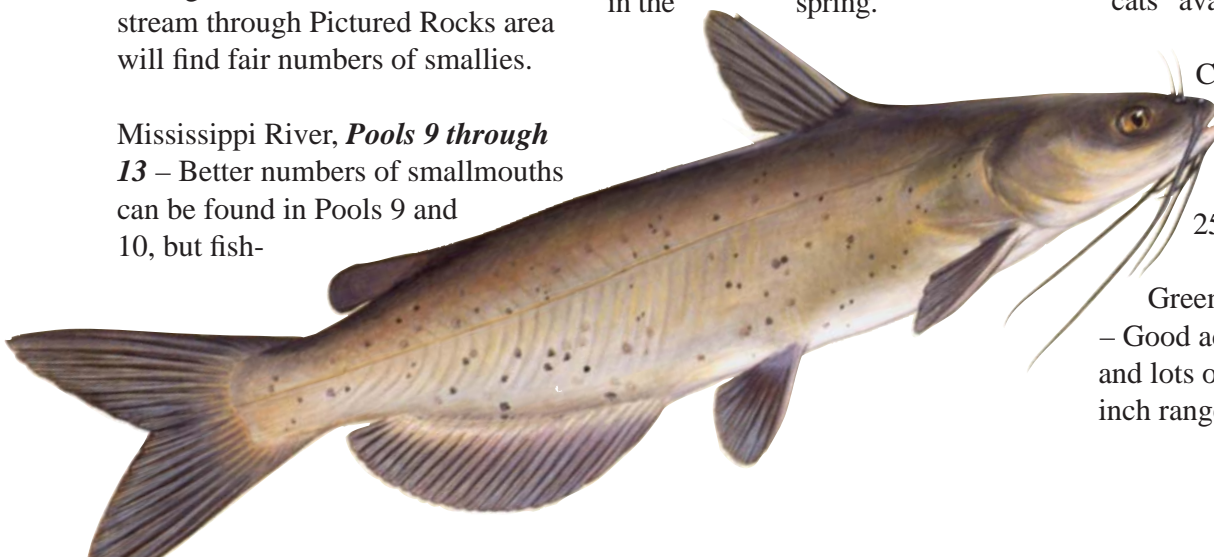
Casey Lake, **Tama** – Local favorite. Good shoreline access. Catfish of all sizes available.

Cedar River, **Bremer** – 2005 fish survey indicates excellent numbers of “cats” available.

Cedar, **Floyd and Mitchell**

– Very good numbers from the Mitchell dam downstream with 20- to 25-inch fish present.

Greenbelt Lake, **Black Hawk** – Good access for family outings and lots of catfish in the 11- to 15-inch range.



Lake Hendricks, **Howard** – Good population of 15- to 20-inch catfish with some up to 25.

Maquoketa River, **Delaware** – Good numbers and size of catfish available. Early morning and late evening is best. Best fishing from Manchester to Lake Delhi dam.

Mississippi River, **Pools 9-15** – Excellent reproduction past few years has produced huge numbers of channel cats in the Mississippi. Try fishing flowing water along secondary channels near brush piles. Size of catfish varies from fiddlers to 4 pounds.

Volga Lake, **Fayette** – Excellent population of all sizes with very abundant 15- to 20-inchers; fish the rip-rap along the dam in mid-summer.

Wapsipinicon River, **Buchanan** – Good numbers of 3- to 5-pound catfish between Otterville and Littleton.

Ensign Hollow, **Clayton** – This catch-and-release-only stream

provides the opportunity to catch trophy-sized brown trout.

Grannis Creek, **Fayette** – Stocked with rainbow and brook trout weekly from April through October; greatly improved habitat and universal fishing access.

Paint Creek, **Allamakee** – Major habitat improvement project

Richmond Springs, **Delaware** – Stocked with catchable-size rainbow trout both during the week and on Saturdays, this is a popular place for family fishing.

Sny Magill Creek, **Clayton** – Increased brown trout population due to fingerling stockings; stocked regularly with rainbows and brooks.

Spring Branch, **Delaware** – Strong population of brown trout 12 inches and greater. Three continuous miles of coldwater stream open to fishing. Good insect hatches on this stream.

Swiss Valley, **Dubuque** – Three consecutive years of fish habitat work helps support trout year round in this county park.

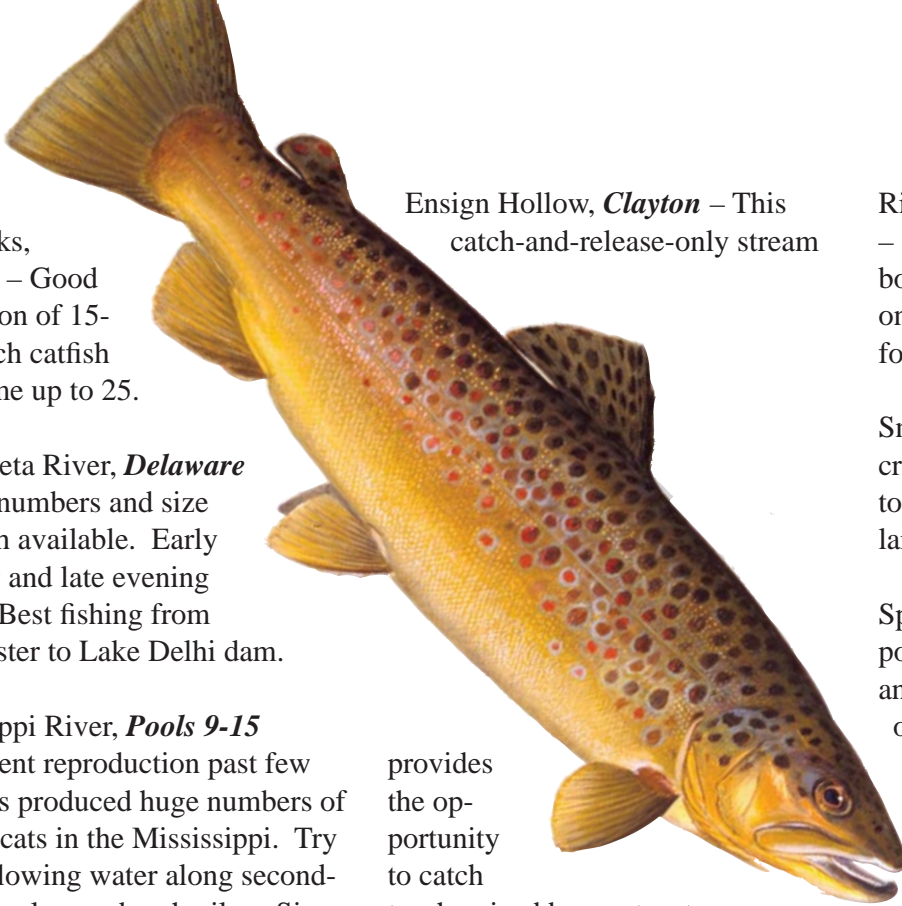
Trout Run, **Winneshiek** – Improvements in trout habitat has resulted in excellent survival of weekly stocked rainbows and brook trout; some wild

brown trout also inhabit this stream.

Waterloo Creek, **Allamakee** – Excellent population of wild brown trout in lower reaches; upper segments stocked with rainbow and brook trout weekly.

Dalton Pond, **Jackson** – Physical improvements to this small area create a park-like atmosphere. Easy, laid-back pond fishing with close access.

completed in 2005; stocked with rainbows and brooks; wild brown trout also present.



trout

bluegills

Bergfeld Pond, **Dubuque** – Located in Dubuque industrial park. This lake is easy for families to fish for abundant 6- to 7-inch bluegills.

Lake Hendricks, **Howard** – Lots of fish up to 8 inches with a 9-inch bluegill a possibility; try poppers along the edge of the submerged vegetation in the summer.

Mississippi River, **Pools 9 – 14** – Although the backwater habitats are deteriorating from siltation, many good habitats have been re-stored into ideal bluegill habitat. Try concentrating on Am-

crappies

Big Woods Lake, **Black Hawk** – A lot of 8-inch crappies for the taking.

Lake Delhi, **Delaware** – Consistent producer of 8- to 10-inch crappies.

Lake Hendricks, **Howard** – Lots of 8- to 10-inch fish; fish the outer edge and small pockets in the abundant submerged vegetation.

Martens Lake, **Bremer** – This segment of Sweet Marsh provides abundant 8- to 9-inch black crappies; white crappies much fewer but larger. Eurasian water milfoil present so remove all aquatic vegetation from boats and trailers before leaving.

Casey Lake, **Tama** – A consistent producer of 8-inch bluegills. Look for these “gills” on beds in May or drift the main lake during the summer months.

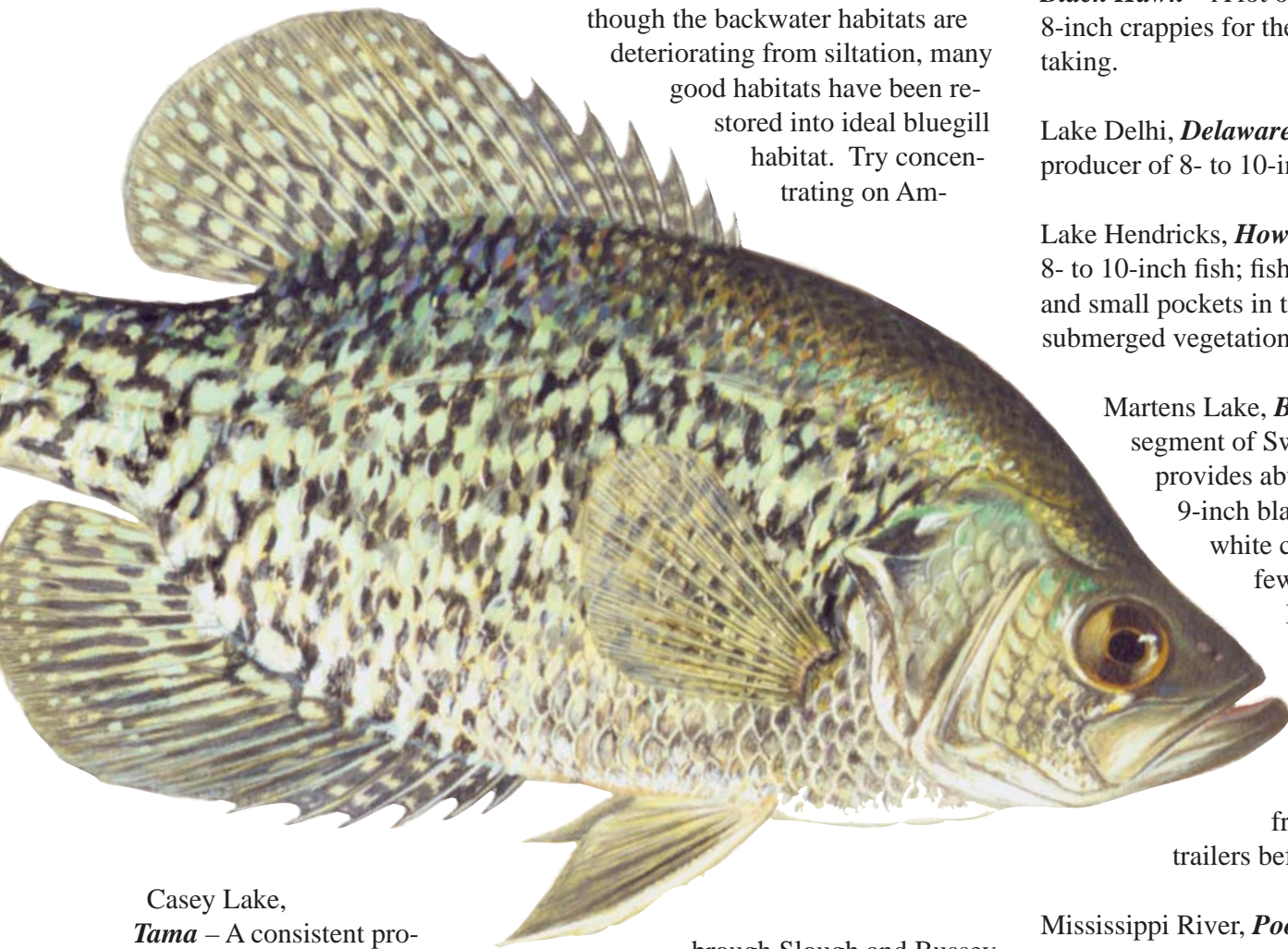
Lake Delhi, **Delaware** – Good numbers of bluegills in the 7- to 8-inch range. Fish the fallen woody structure along rocky shorelines. Fish early morning or late afternoon to avoid heavy boat traffic on this narrow Maquoketa River impoundment.

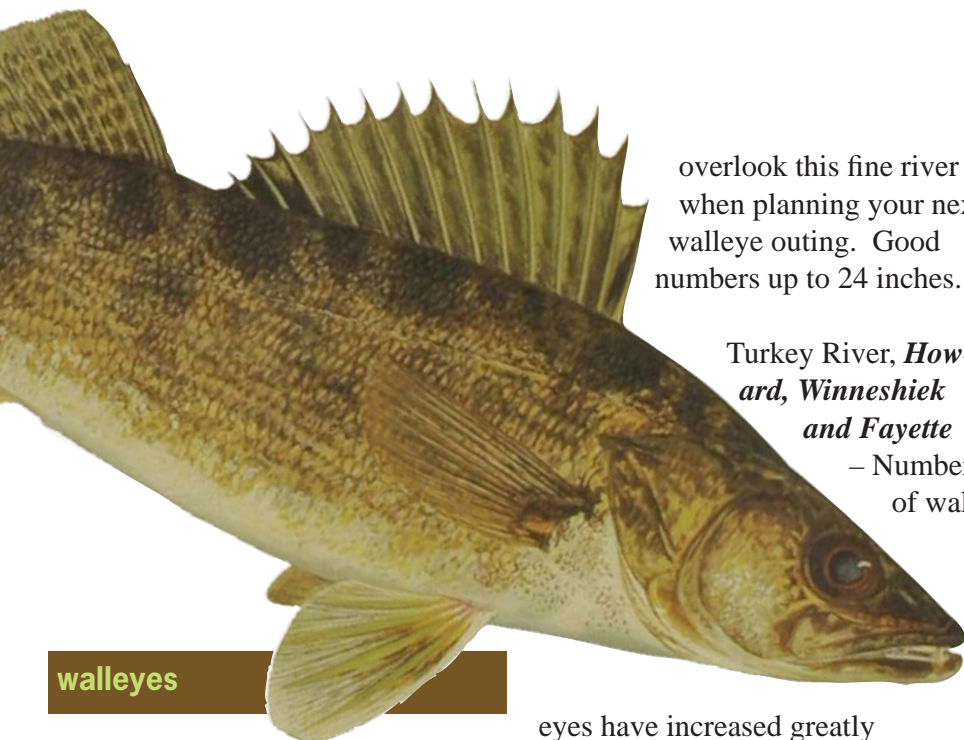
brough Slough and Bussey Lake in Pool 10, Sunfish Lake and Bertom Lake in Pool 11, Browns Lake and Pomme de Terre Lake in Pool 13.

Volga Lake, **Fayette** – Good numbers of 6-8 inch bluegills; the face of the dam (especially in early spring) and submerged brush piles on the south shore are good areas.

Mississippi River, **Pools 9-14** – Crappie populations remain strong in the Mississippi. Best times are early morning and late afternoon. Concentrate on the deeper backwater areas or low current sloughs near woody structure and brushpiles.

Volga Lake, **Fayette** – Fish the riprap on the dam in spring for 9- to 11-inch fish; work the large submerged brush piles in summer.





walleyes

Cedar River, **Black Hawk** – Good walleye fishing below the dam in Waterloo in fall and early winter. Trophy-size fish caught every year.

Cedar River, **Bremer** – Fisheries surveys indicate good survival of stocked walleyes from recent years. Good numbers of 15-inch-plus walleyes available.

Cedar River, **Floyd and Mitchell** – A consistent producer for quality walleye angling; populations maintained through annual fingerling stockings. Mississippi River, **Pools 9-15** – The 2005 walleye fishery was slower than 2004, but the population is still good. Strong year classes of young walleyes coming on bodes well for future years.

Shellrock River, **Butler** – Don't

overlook this fine river when planning your next walleye outing. Good numbers up to 24 inches.

Turkey River, **Howard, Winneshiek and Fayette**
– Numbers of wall-

eyes have increased greatly since fingerling stockings were initiated in 2000.

Wapsipinicon River, **Buchanan**
– Annual stockings have made this river a consistent producer of abundant and quality-size fish.

largemouth bass

George Wyth Lake, **Black Hawk** – What this population lacks in numbers it

makes up for in size. Bass 18 to 19 inches available.

Lake Delhi, Delaware – There is a good year-class of bass 12 to 15 inches present. Fish the fallen woody structure along rocky

shorelines. Fish early morning and late afternoon to avoid heavy boat traffic on this narrow Maquoketa River impoundment.

Lake Hendricks, **Howard** – High numbers of bass up to 16 inches.

Mississippi River, **Pools 9-14**
– Strong numbers of largemouth bass exist in the Mississippi River. Bigmouths often change locations throughout the year. Bass reside in low current backwaters in the cold seasons and many move into flowing sloughs and channels and even onto near-channel wingdams in the warmer months.

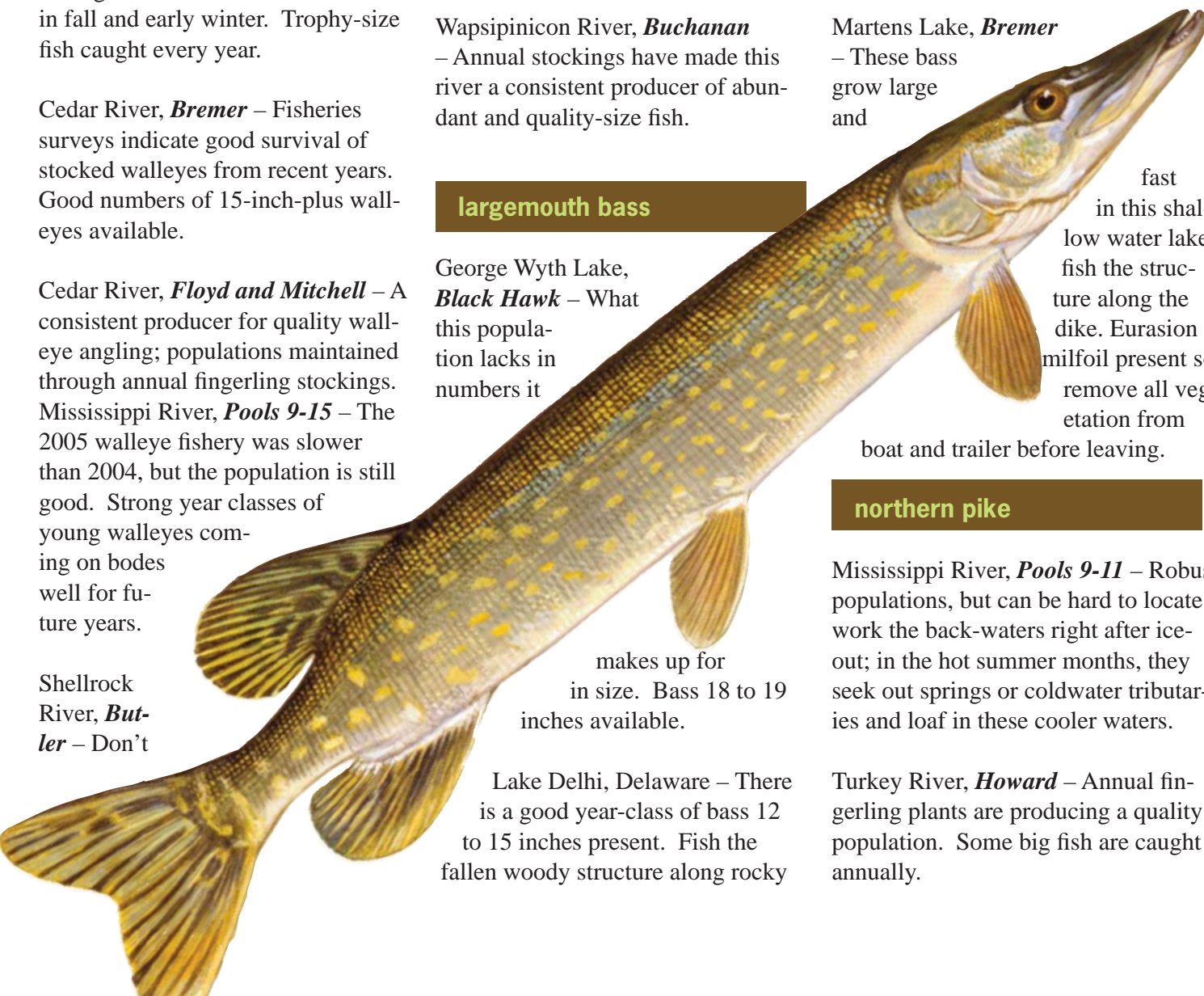
Martens Lake, **Bremer**
– These bass grow large and

fast in this shallow water lake; fish the structure along the dike. Eurasian milfoil present so remove all vegetation from boat and trailer before leaving.

northern pike

Mississippi River, **Pools 9-11** – Robust populations, but can be hard to locate; work the back-waters right after ice-out; in the hot summer months, they seek out springs or coldwater tributaries and loaf in these cooler waters.

Turkey River, **Howard** – Annual fingerling plants are producing a quality population. Some big fish are caught annually.



northwest iowa & northcentral

By Thomas Gengerke, Regional Fisheries Supervisor

walleye

Clear Lake, **Cerro Gordo** – Harvest was down in 2005, but should recover some in 2006. A fall electrofishing survey showed good numbers of 14- to 16-inch fish.

Iowa River, **Hardin** – 2005 survey revealed excellent numbers of 1-pound fish, with walleye up to 10 pounds collected.

Des Moines River, **Kossuth & Humboldt** – Both the East and West Forks have produced good catches in the spring and fall in recent years.

Silver Lake, **Dickinson** – Good numbers of 13- to 18-inch fish will be creel. Excellent opportunities exist to catch a trophy-sized fish. Try crank baits in July.

Five Island Lake, **Palo Alto** – Smaller fish will enter the creel in 2006. Good walleye growth will sustain the fishery.

Spirit Lake, **Dickinson** – Good numbers of 14-inch and larger fish

available. In the spring, fish after dark. Later in the season fish a jig and a minnow through the weeds or cast and retrieve a nightcrawler.

Storm Lake, **Buena Vista** – Good population. Males average 19 inches while females average 20.7 inches in the spring. Troll crank-

baits or vertically jig along the new dredge cuts. Don't forget that there is a 15-inch length limit with only one fish over 22 inches allowed per day.

yellow perch

Rice Lake, **Winnebago** – Good fall and winter fishery.

Silver Lake, **Worth** – Dense population, sorting required, fish up to 10 inches collected in 2005 survey.

Lake Cornelia, **Wright** – Nice size fish (10-inch-plus), but don't expect many limits.

Spirit Lake, **Dickinson** – Yellow perch anglers will see an upswing to the fishery, as good numbers of fish will be available during the 2006 season. Yellow perch 9 to 10.5 inches will be common in the catch and will sustain the fishery for the fall.

bullheads

North Twin Lake, **Calhoun** – Huge numbers of quality bullheads. Lot's of fish over a pound in last year's survey.

Black Hawk Lake, **Sac** – Bullheads and lot's of them sum up the fishing potential. Most fish are between 7.5 and 8.5 inches.



Dog Creek Lake, **O'Brien** – This small lake again has the potential to provide anglers quality fishing during 2006. Fish the north and west ends of the lake early in the season.

Silver Lake, **Dickinson** – You can “fill the bucket” at Silver Lake with good numbers of large fish.

Center Lake, **Dickinson** – Fewer bullheads will be caught in 2006; however, anglers will continue to harvest fish approaching 12 inches.

Crystal Lake, **Hancock** – High density of three-quarter-pound fish.

Rice Lake, **Winnebago** – Springtime, shortly after ice-out will produce good results.

channel catfish

Scharnberg Pond, **Clay** – Good numbers of “nice” size channel catfish are available from this county area. Traditional baits are in order; however, don’t overlook live bait such as nightcrawlers.

Silver Lake, **Dickinson** – Virtually untapped fishery. Try fishing at night with live bait such as chubs or crawlers and a bonus walleye may be added to the stringer.

Ingham Lake, **Emmet** – Excellent angling during 2006. Restocked in 2001, these fish have had excellent growth with good numbers of fish 15 to 17 inches available.

Storm Lake, **Buena Vista** – Try fishing a bobber and live bait around the islands in May and June

and drifting a leech or crawler in the summer months. Lot’s of fish!

Brown’s Lake, **Woodbury** – Catfish in the 1- to 5-pound range and in excellent body condition abound in this oxbow lake of western Iowa.

Boone River, **Hamilton** – Scenic river with lot’s of fish between one-half and 2 pounds.

Iowa River, **Hardin** – 2005 survey showed good numbers of fish in the 3 to 5 pound range.

Lake Cornelia, **Wright** – High density of fish that are underutilized.

Crystal Lake, **Hancock** – 2005 netting survey revealed an abundant population of 1- to 2-pound catfish.

bluegills

Upper Pine Lake, **Hardin** – Dense population, with many over 7 inches.

Eldred Sherwood, **Hancock** – Lot’s of nice fish caught on the weed line in 2005.

Brushy Creek, **Webster** – Huge year class of 8- to 9-inch bluegills. 2006 should be a banner year. In May and June fish the north end.

North Twin, **Calhoun** – Lot’s of big ‘gills in this lake. Fish in the shade of the docks during the summer and fall with a little leadhead.

Yellow Smoke Lake, **Crawford** – Drift fishing a small leadhead tipped with a waxworm is a great way to catch the 8- 10-inch bluegills in Yellow Smoke.

Dog Creek Lake, **O'Brien** – Fish the submerged shallow water timber during the spring. Growth throughout the summer will provide an upswing to the fishery from now through the 2007 season.

Lake Pahoja, **Lyon** – Quality (6 to 8 inches) size fish dominate the catch.

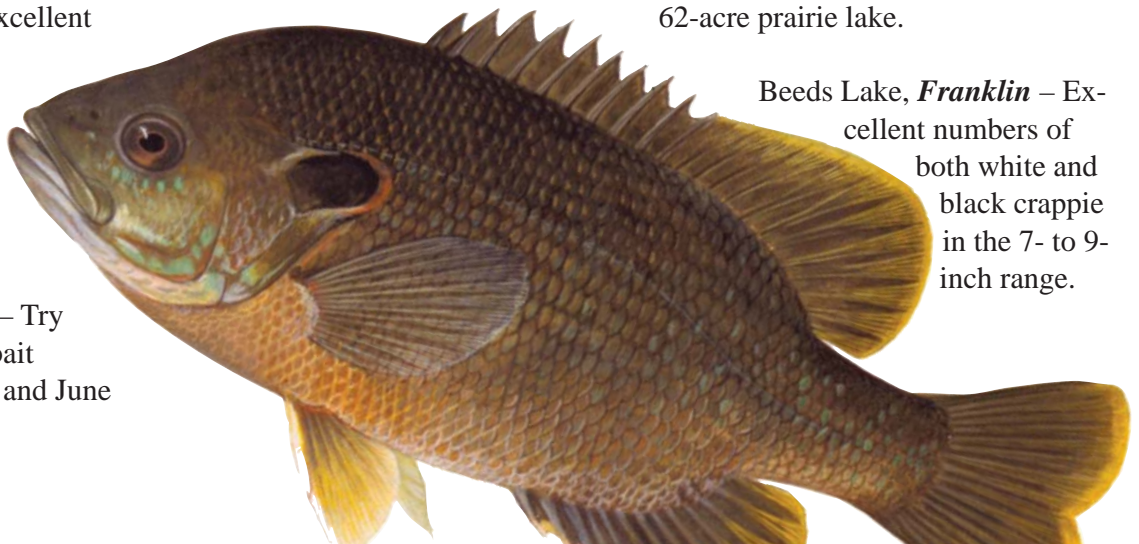
Center Lake, **Dickinson** – Fish near the overhanging and submerged brush. Density on the upswing.

crappie

Black Hawk Lake, **Sac** – Fall fishing is just as good as spring so anglers have two prime times to catch a mess of nice crappie. Fish average 8 to 10 inches but 14-inch fish are available.

Crawford Creek Lake, **Ida** – Drift fishing using a small leadhead tipped with live bait is very effective in locating and catching crappie in this 62-acre prairie lake.

Beeds Lake, **Franklin** – Excellent numbers of both white and black crappie in the 7- to 9-inch range.



Briggs Woods Lake, **Hamilton** – Eight- to 9-inch crappies provide year round angling.

Lower Pine Lake, **Hardin** – Fish downed trees along shoreline in spring and drift fish in open water during the summer.

Spirit Lake, **Dickinson** – 2005 was the best in years. Fish the north end shore, Hales and Templar Lagoon in the spring.

largemouth bass

Brushy Creek Lake, **Webster** – One of the state's hottest bass lakes. Good water quality plus habit equals good bass numbers.

Spirit Lake, **Dickinson** – Anglers will experience excellent catches of fish greater than 15 inches; however, anglers are strongly urged to practice catch-and-release of this predator species.

Upper Pine Lake, **Hardin** – Good size structure, with many fish greater than 3 pounds.

Smith Lake, **Kossuth** – High density of football-size bass observed in 2005 survey.

smallmouth bass

Spirit Lake, **Dickinson** – Fine population of “smallies.” Action begins shortly after ice-out around shallow rock piles on sunny, calm days using jigs and minnows. As the water warms the fish disperse to deeper rock piles and emerging weeds and can be caught with live bait and artificials.

West Okoboji, **Dickinson** – Consistent producer. Fish are 15 inches and larger. Rocks are the key early with rocks, weeds and weed lines productive in the summer. Leeches are a good summer bait.

Iowa River, **Hardin** – Forty percent of the fish collected in 2005 survey were 12 inches or greater.

Boone River, **Hamilton** – Fish over 18 inches collected in most recent survey.

northern pike

Spirit Lake, **Dickinson** – Good numbers of angler-acceptable

size fish and larger will be common to the Spirit Lake angler. An indicator of this increased pike population is the steadily increasing net catches of this species during walleye brood stock netting operations.

West Okoboji, **Dickinson** – Good numbers of large fish are caught every winter. During the open water season fish early and late in the season for the best results and use large baits such as chubs or large artificial baits.

Winnebago River, **Winnebago, Hancock, Worth, Cerro Gordo** – Stocked with fingerlings annually. Produces nice fish both spring and fall.

Iowa River, **Hardin** – Three- to 6-pound fish observed in survey between Alden and Iowa Falls.

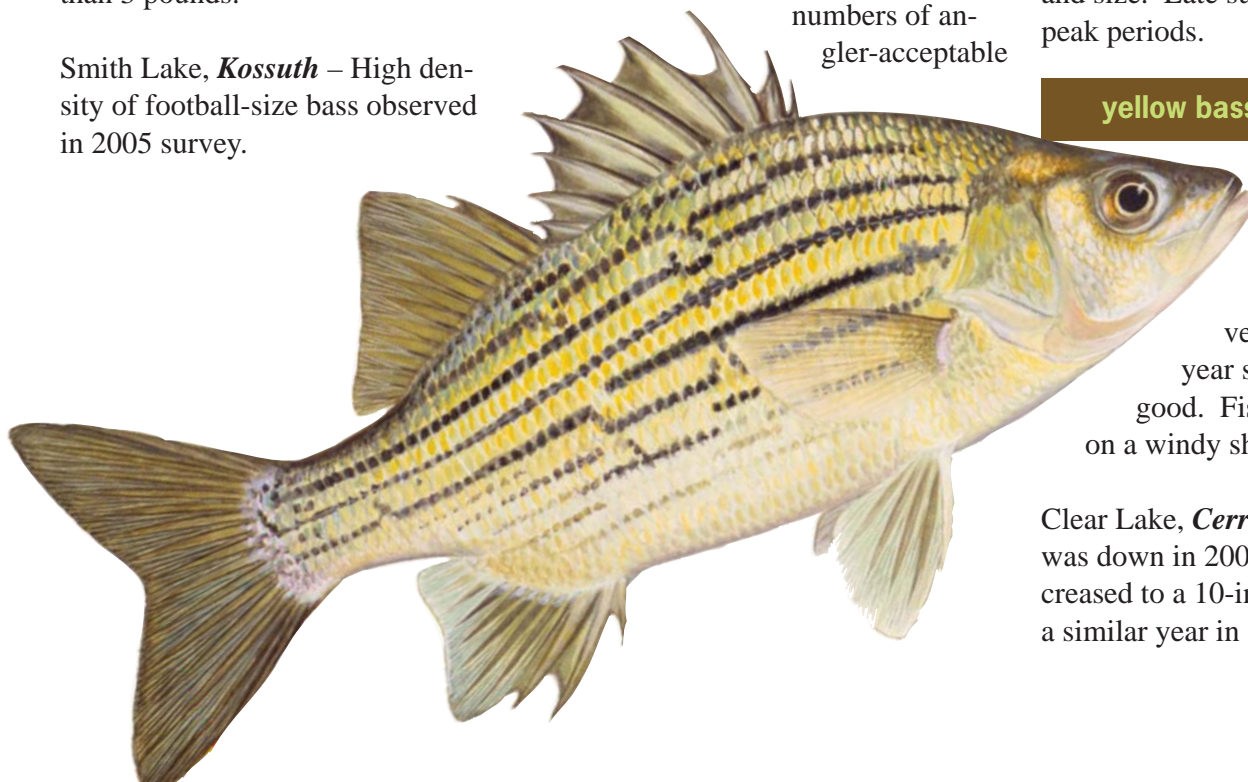
muskellunge

Muskie populations in Clear Lake, **Cerro Gordo**, Spirit and West Okoboji, **Dickinson**, and Brushy Creek, **Webster** have matured in numbers and size. Late summer and fall are peak periods.

yellow bass

Black Hawk Lake, **Sac** – Thousands of yellow bass harvested in 2005. This year should be just as good. Fish a small leadhead on a windy shoreline.

Clear Lake, **Cerro Gordo** – Harvest was down in 2005; however, size increased to a 10-inch average. Expect a similar year in 2006.



southeast*io*wa

By Steve Waters, [Regional Fisheries Supervisor](#)

bluegill

Belva Deer Lake, **Keokuk** – Lots of 7- to 10-inch fish.

Lake Sugema, **Van Buren** – Tremendous numbers of 7- to 9-inch fish. Habitat galore!

Lake Wapello, **Davis** – Excellent numbers of 8- to 9-inch fish. Plentiful rock and woody habitat as well as vegetation.

Indian Lake, **Van Buren** – Excellent quality; 8- to 10-inch fish.

Hawthorn Lake, **Mahaska** – Good numbers of 7- to 9-inch fish

Farm Ponds, all counties – Mostly private water; best place for a trophy.

Lake Geode, **Henry** – Good numbers of 7- to 9-inch fish with 10-inch fish present.

Lake Odessa, **Louisa** – Lots of 7- to 9-inch fast growing fish; find woody areas.

Shimek Ponds, **VanBuren** – Seven to 9-inch fish common; five ponds.

Diamond Lake, **Poweshiek** – Seven- to 9-inch fish off jetties and around brush piles.

crappie

Coralville Reservoir, **Linn** – Fish around downed trees or vertical jig rocky shorelines; 10- to 14 inch fish common.

Lake Macbride, **Johnson** – Gobs of 8- to 10-inch fish.

Hawthorn Lake, **Mahaska** – Abundant 8- to 10 inch fish.

Iowa Lake, **Iowa** – Good numbers of 9- to 11-inch fish.

Mississippi River, Big Timber area – Eight- to 10-inch fish common; big fish present.

Lake Odessa, **Louisa** – Abundant 10- to 12-inch fish; some trophies.

Rathbun Lake, **Appanoose** – Excellent numbers of 9- to 11-inch fish; a must-go-to lake.

Lake Miami, **Monroe** – Tons of 8- to 10 inch fish.

Indian Lake, **Van Buren** – Nine- to 11-inch fish with 12- to 14 inch available.

Lake Darling, **Washington** – Nine-to 11-inch are common; big fish swimming.

largemouth bass

Mississippi River, Big Timber – Great numbers, all sizes.

Lake Odessa, **Louisa** – Good numbers of fish up to 22 inches.

Lake Miami, **Monroe** – Excellent numbers-all sizes; fish submerged timber.

Lake Wapello, **Davis** – No-kill regulation; many 12- to 15-inch fish and some reach 20 inches.

Hawthorn Lake, **Mahaska** – Great population of 12- to 22-inch fish.

Lake Sugema, **Van Buren** – Twelve- to 18-inch protected slot limit; numerous 11- to 17-inch fish.

Pleasant, Creek **Linn** – Lots of 12- to 16-inch fish; 18-inch minimum size limit.



Lake Macbride, **Johnson** – Good numbers-all sizes; lots of new habitat and Kentucky spotted bass present

Diamond Lake, **Poweshiek** – Good numbers of 2- to 4 pound fish; target pallets.

Farm Ponds, **all counties** – Best chance for a trophy; mostly private water.

channel catfish

Mississippi River, **Pools 16-19** – Best catfish hole in the state.

Lake Darling, **Washington** – Lots of 15- to 19-inch fish; 9-pounders present.

Coralville Reservoir, **Johnson** – Excellent population-all sizes

Kent Park, **Johnson** – Outstanding angling; excellent shoreline access.

Otter Creek, **Tama** – Lots of 14- to 20-inch fish.

Rathbun Lake, **Appanoose** – Exceptional fishery; they're everywhere; all sizes

Most Interior Rivers – Exceptional fishery-all sizes; fish snag areas.

Hawthorn Lake, **Mahaska** – Excellent fishery with fish up to 25 inches.

Corydon Lake, **Wayne** – Abundant numbers due to the cage catfish program.

Lake Miami, Monroe – Excellent numbers-all sizes.

walleye

Rathbun Reservoir, **Appanoose** – Excellent fishery; late spring/summer is best.

Mississippi River, **lock and dam 15 and 17** – Great tailwater fishery; fish move to wing dams in summer.

Iowa River, **Johnson** – Fish below Coralville Dam and Burlington Street Dam in Iowa City.

Wapsi River, **Linn and Jones** – Fish below dams at Central City and Anamosa.

white bass

Rathbun Lake, **Appanoose** – Excellent fishery with fish averaging 10 to 14 inches.

Mississippi River – Fish below

locks and dam and wing dams; plentiful.

Pleasant Creek, **Linn** – Look for schools feeding on surface in summer; 16-inch fish common.

flathead catfish

Skunk River (all stretches) – This popular fishery is easy to fish because of its size.

Mississippi River, **pools 16-19** – Best below locks and dams and side channels.



Rathbun Reservoir, **Appanoose** – Target the Bridgeview area.

Iowa, and Wapsipinicon Des Moines rivers – Good for all sizes. Look for big fish in holes during summer and around drift piles and bridge pilings.

red ear sunfish

Lake Geode, **Henry** – Fish have been sampled up to 11 1/2 in.

Lake Wapello, **Davis** – Good numbers of 8-12 in. fish.

Lake Sugema, **Van Buren** – Good numbers of 8-12 in. fish.



southwest*io*wa

By Andy Moore, [Regional Fisheries Supervisor](#)

bluegill

Big Creek, ***Polk*** – Seven- to 9-inch fish available; fish small jigs and crawlers near the jetties and spawning beds.

Greenfield Lake, ***Adair***
– Good numbers of 7- to 9-inch fish.

Littlefield Lake, ***Audubon***
– Eight- to 9-inch fish common; Fish near shoreline spawning beds or try summer drift fishing.

Fogle Lake, ***Ringgold***
– Seven- to 8-inch common; most predictable catch.

Green Valley, ***Union***
– Seven and one-half- to 8 1/2- inch fish common.



crappie

Red Rock Lake, ***Marion*** – Eleven- to 15-inch fish, fish feeder stream coves and the dam area if water quality is good.





Nodaway Lake, **Adair**

– Good numbers of 8- to 10-inch fish; find the brush piles.

largemouth bass

Mormon Trail, **Adair**

– All sizes up to 18 inches.

West Lake, **Clarke** – All sizes; 14- to 17-inches common.

Ahquabi Lake, **Warren** – Good population of 15-inch-plus bass.

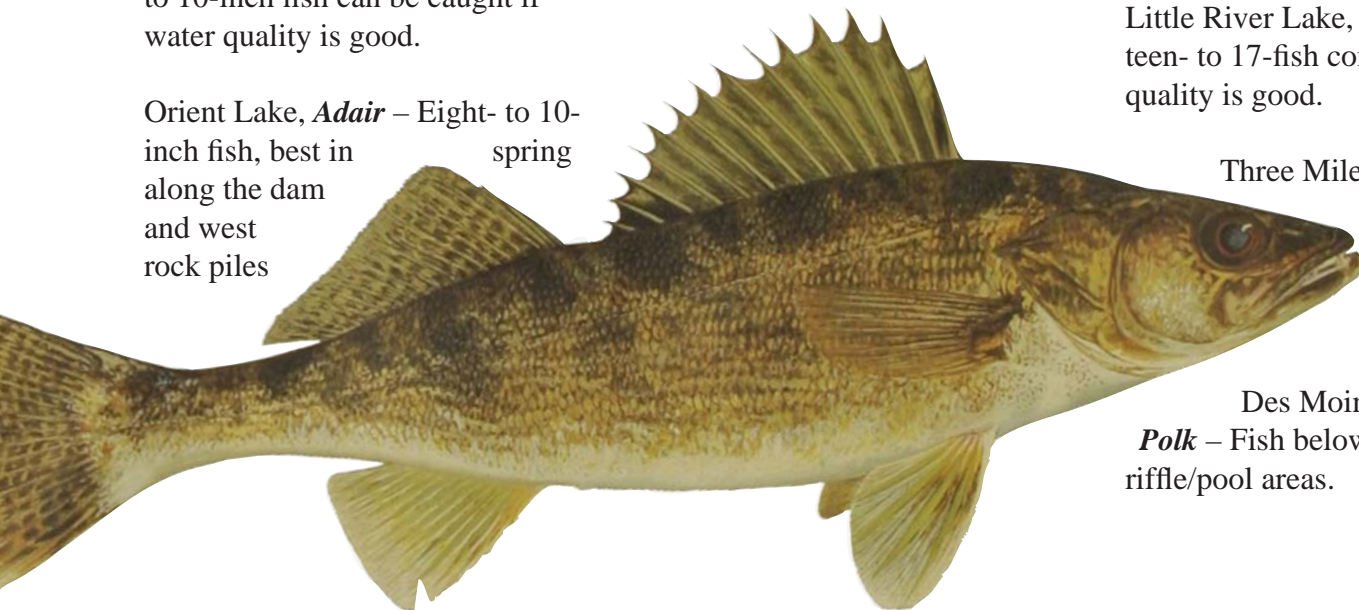
Blue Heron Lake, **Polk** – Good numbers, large bass available.

Three Mile Lake, **Union** – Eight- to 11-inch fish common; Fish near the dam and in the flooded timber.

Little River Lake, **Decatur** – Eight- to 10-inch fish can be caught if water quality is good.

Orient Lake, **Adair** – Eight- to 10-inch fish, best in spring along the dam and west rock piles

Prairie Rose Lake, **Shelby** – Large 14- to 20-inch fish; trophy fishery.



channel catfish

Prairie Rose Lake, **Shelby** – High numbers of 3- to 6-pound fish; large flatheads also available.

Green Valley Lake, **Union** – All sizes up to 30 inches.

Nine Eagles Lake, **Decatur** – Large numbers, average 14 to 25 inches.

Rock Creek Lake, **Jasper** – Good population of 16- to 20-inch fish.

Greenfield Lake, **Adair** – Large numbers of 2-pound fish

walleye

Lake Manawa, **Pottawattamie** – Good numbers of all sizes.

Saylorville Lake, **Polk** – fifteen- to 20-inch fish; try Cherry Glen to the marina.

Little River Lake, **Decatur** – Thirteen- to 17-fish common if water quality is good.

Three Mile Lake, **Union** – All sizes with plenty of fish exceeding 26 inches.

Des Moines River, **Boone, Polk** – Fish below dams and in riffle/pool areas.

hiddenjewel

2006

northeast

By Bill Kalishek, biologist
The Cedar River in Mitchell County, from the town of Mitchell downstream, offers excellent angling for native populations of smallmouth bass and channel catfish. Annual stockings of fingerling walleye and northern pike also provide great fishing. It's best to float the river in a canoe or walk the Cedar River Greenbelt Trail from highway 9 to Mitchell or the Spring Park Trails. Interstate Park at Mitchell (modern facilities) and Spring Park near Osage (primitive camping) provide riverside accommodations.

northwest

By Jim Christianson, biologist
Lake Pahoja, Lyon County, is a 70-acre man-made lake that provides hours of recreation for the outdoor enthusiast. The fishing clientele is rather localized, probably due to its location in extreme northwestern Iowa. With recent fish management activities, the bluegill and crappie fisheries should expand and provide some good angling. This, along with some very good channel catfish fishing, will make this lake an angler's destination. The park area

adjacent to the lake is managed by the Lyon County Conservation Board and provides many amenities, including camping pads, cabins, trails, a beach, playgrounds, boat rentals and a covered fishing pier.

southeast

By Don Kline, biologist
Yenrougis Pond lays just 2 miles north of Sigourney. The rugged landscape of the abandoned rock quarry compliments the crystal clear water. Anglers will find healthy populations of bluegills, black crappies, largemouth bass, channel catfish and redear sunfish. Expect to catch a bunch of nice size fish of all species. Just vary your tackle and bait to fit the species of fish. Try a small hook and pinch of worm for panfish, flashy spinner baits for bass and smelly stink baits for catfish. Dabble along the shoreline or work the deeper water in a canoe or float tube. A gravel ramp is available for small boats with electric motors. Bring a picnic



Nine Eagles Lake

or plan a primitive camp out in this quiet scenic area.

southwest

By Gary Sobotka, biologist
Nine Eagles Lake is a 56-acre lake hidden in Decatur County near Davis City. The lake has good populations of bluegill, largemouth bass and an underused population of channel catfish. Along with this, an excellent state park with good camping facilities is available.

tophunch

2006

northeast

By Bryan Hayes, biologist
A catch-and-release regulation on smallmouth bass in a four mile segment of the Maquoketa River



Lake McBride

anglers witnessed an incredible increase in numbers and size of smallmouth bass. A string of low reproduction-years in the middle 1990s caused a downturn in the population that a catch-and-release regulation couldn't prevent. The smallmouth bass fishing in this segment is a top hunch for 2006 because of the rebounding numbers witnessed in last fall's fishery survey. Numbers and size are back. Anglers can access this area by small jon-boat, canoe or wading this scenic stretch of river in Delaware County.

northwest

By Lannie Miller, biologist
North Twin Lake in Calhoun County has it all. It has great fishing for a variety of fish, including bluegills and crappies up to 10 inches, yellow

starting just below Lake Delhi Dam was implemented almost 20 years ago. The first 10 years of the regulation

bass by the boat load, bullheads weighing more than a pound, walleye in the 2-pound-plus class and unlimited channel cat fishing. Combine this with excellent water clarity and you have the makings of a great outdoor adventure. Shoreline fishing is available but boat anglers will have the advantage.

southeast

By Paul Sleeper, biologist
All indications point toward a banner year for panfish at Lake Macbride. If you want to catch lots of bluegill, than Lake Macbride is the place to go. Most bluegills at Macbride will be around 6 to 7 inches and can be caught near the brush piles all year. There is also a strong year class of crappie from 8 to 10 inches. Fish these crappie in shallow brush in the spring and late fall. In the summer months crappie move away from the shorelines and suspend over deeper water. Macbride is a shoreline anglers dream spot with numerous hiking trails that will take you around most of the lake.

southwest

By Chris Larson, biologist
Lake Anita in Cass County is a good bet for excellent bluegill, largemouth bass and channel catfish fishing if the lake fills in the spring. The fish population was renovated in 2003 and additional fish habitat placed in the lake bottom, however fishing has been limited because the lake has been about 3 feet low for two years. If the lake does not fill, a temporary boat ramp will be constructed to improve access.



Maquoketa River

riverrat

2006

northeast

By Mark Winn, technician

The scenic Wapsipinicon River flowing through northeast Iowa offers diverse fishing opportunities for anglers and should be a top priority for anglers this coming season. Whether after northern pike, walleye, smallmouth bass, channel catfish or an occasional nice creel of crappies, this river offers all types of diverse habitats holding good numbers and sizes of fish. These species, with the exception of walleyes, are all self-sustaining naturally reproducing populations. Accessing fish in the “Wapsi” can be as easy as throwing on a pair of old sneakers and wading in Bremer County, or floating a jonboat in Buchanan County.

northwest

By Jim Wahl, biologist

The Iowa River in Hardin County is one of the most scenic rivers in Iowa and offers some of the best fishing as well. Limestone rock provides rock-rubble substrate throughout the county, which is the preferred habitat for smallmouth bass. Channel catfish and northern pike also inhabit the river and provide self-sustaining

populations. Walleye fingerlings are stocked annually and have produced outstanding fishing in recent

years. Access is excellent with an abundance of public approaches throughout the county. Many anglers prefer to fish by canoe or small jonboat, however much of the stream is wadeable.

southeast

By Bernie Schonhoff, biologist

What makes the Mississippi River the best place for a fishing adventure no matter what you’re after? DIVERSITY. The Mighty Mississippi has something for everyone. You like catfish? Channel or flathead catfish, and bullheads, the Mississippi has them all. Like your fish with scales? Largemouth and smallmouth bass, the river has them both — just ask the ESPN/BASS

tournament anglers headed there this year. White bass are abundant and they’re willing biters, especially in the tailwaters in the spring. People often associate walleye and sauger with the northern lakes country, but they’re in the river in good numbers. Whether it’s crappies, bluegills or perch, the backwaters have plenty of panfish as well.

southwest

By Andy Moore, supervisor

Two rivers, the Des Moines in Boone and Polk counties and the Middle Raccoon from Panora to Redfield in Guthrie and Dallas counties, are excellent fishing destinations. The Des Moines can be good for walleye, channel catfish, white bass and hybrid striped bass. Fishing can be good below the various low head dams in the Des Moines area and below the Saylorville and Red Rock dams into Marion County. The Middle Raccoon has very good walleye and smallmouth bass (catch-and-release only) fishing. New habitat has been constructed in the river above the highway P28 access.



Mississippi River

worthmore than a day 2006

northeast

By Scott Gritters, biologist
You can maximize a couple fishing days up the Great River Road along the upper Mississippi River. The road runs along the eastern border of Iowa and connects with our neighboring states. Pick any section of the Great River Road and you can spend a couple quality days along the Mississippi River. This summer however, try concentrating on a trip



Pine Lake

section of the roadtrip has numerous fishing sites, great sightseeing and small river towns that are big on

hospitality. Some must see spots to visit are the Guttenberg aquarium, Guttenberg river walkway, Bussey Lake fishing float, Pikes Peak State Park, Effigy Mounds National Monument, Sny Magill and Bloody Run trout stream.

northwest

By Jim Wahl, biologist
Upper and Lower Pine lakes, located one-half mile east of Eldora, will provide some of the best bass fishing in northern Iowa. Both of these lakes support bass in the 6- to 7-pound range, with good numbers exceeding 3 pounds. If you prefer panfish, crappie and bluegill are abundant in both lakes. The Iowa River is within a stones throw of the lower lake dam and produces good catches of smallmouth bass, channel catfish and an occasional walleye or pike. Camping is available at Pine Lake State Park on the upper lake

and rental cabins are available on the Iowa River.

southeast

By Mark Flammang, biologist
It's one of Iowa's largest lakes and has the fishing quality to match. Year-in and year-out Lake Rathbun (Appanoose County) is recognized across Iowa and the Midwest as one of the great "go to" places for the crappie enthusiast, and 2006 will bring an abundance of 10- to 12-inch crappies. How about spending a day or two more chasing the walleye on Lake Rathbun? The all-time record for walleye harvest at Rathbun was set last year, with great numbers of 15- to 21-inch fish common.

southwest

By Dick McWilliams, biologist
The Polk County area offers enough fishing to last more than a day. Gray's, Easter, Big Creek, Blue Heron and Saylorville lakes, with a combined 6,800 acres of water, offer fishing for everything from channel catfish to hybrid striped bass to bluegill. Add the Des Moines River in Polk County into the mix, and excellent fishing with good access is readily available. Good lodging and restaurant accommodations, plus entertainment, make this area very inviting.



Mississippi River

familyvacation spot 2006

northeast

By Bryan Hayes, biologist
Backbone State Park was Iowa's first dedicated state park back in 1920. As it was then, it remains one of the great family vacation spots in Iowa. Activities at the park and in surrounding communities are well worth planning a vacation around. Anglers can take fish from the well-stocked trout stream in the park, which is a popular place on Saturdays throughout the summer when the stocking truck arrives. The kids enjoy seeing the fish released into the stream and then going after 'em. Scenic Backbone Lake can add some variety to the creel. The good largemouth bass fishing from last year will likely carry over to 2006. All the accommodations needed for a memorable family vacation can be found within the park, and the scenery is priceless. Area events of interest include: Strawberry Days, June 9–11, Strawberry Point; Edgewood Rodeo Days, June 22–25, Edgewood; Delaware County Fair, July 10–16, Manchester; and the 25th Annual Backbone Bluegrass Festival, July 28–30. For more information, visit the Area Chamber of Commerce websites at; www.strawberrypt.com or www.manchesteriowa.org.

northwest

By Jim Wahl, biologist
There's something for everyone in the family at Clear Lake. Walleye, yellow bass, channel catfish, bullhead or even a muskie provides the angler plenty of opportunities on this 3,700-acre natural lake. Three public swim beaches are available, as well as water skiing and sailing. If you don't care for water activities, shop the many antique stores in downtown Clear Lake, or spend some time on one of three golf courses. Visitors are treated to special events at City Park nearly every weekend throughout the summer, and the Lady of the Lake tour boat is docked across the street. Several campgrounds and lodging facilities are available on or near the lake.

southeast

By Mark Flammang, biologist
Renovated in 1993, Lake Wapello in Davis County provides outstanding angling for bluegill (8- and 9-inch fish are common) and largemouth bass. Largemouth bass are extremely abundant and provide tremendous catch-and-releas-only angling. Camping spots are abundant and the recently renovated cabins provide a quiet and



Backbone State Park



Three Fires Lake

comfortable get away. Don't forget the lodge and restaurant on the lakeshore. Wapello is also a short drive from the historic Bloomfield

southwest

town square. By Gary Sobotka, biologist
Three Fires Lake in Taylor County is 80 acres and has great facilities for the family. Besides a new and rapidly growing fish population, there is tent camping and cabins, a swimming beach, playground, and best of all, there is excellent water quality.